

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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MEASLES

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MEASLES

Measles is one of the most readily communicable of all diseases. Each year it is the cause of a number of deaths, in addition to leaving a trail of serious complications. It is especially serious in young children. It is spread by secretions from the nose and mouth of those with the disease, as for instance when such person coughs or sneezes in the face of another. It usually occurs in epidemic form about every two years. One attack produces immunity but second attacks do occur. Although it is generally found among children adults are susceptible.

One reason for the very great prevalence of this disease is that people take so little trouble to avoid what they consider a mild insignificant disease and many are of the opinion that everyone has to have measles, and the sooner it is over with the better. This is absolutely wrong, measles should be avoided if at all possible because it is often accompanied with pneumonia, and may have a fatal ending both in children and adults. Eyesight and hearing may be affected following measles.

The great difficulty in controlling epidemics of measles is due to the fact that the disease is contagious before the rash appears, and it is difficult to diagnose definitely until the rash shows up. An early diagnosis of measles or "suspected measles" may often be made from signs which appear in the mouth, throat and eyes during the catarrhal stage or "stage of invasion," before the rash develops. The rash usually occurs about the third day of the illness, appearing first on the face and spreading all over the body.

The symptoms begin from nine (9) to fourteen (14) days after exposure to the infection, and at first are like those of a "cold"; the child is feverish,

the eyes are watery and sensitive to light, there is a watery discharge from the nose, the throat is often congested and sore, and there is sneezing with a hard dry cough. These symptoms last about three days before the rash appears, and the infectious virus is present in the discharges and is readily carried to those coming in contact with the patient.

From two to five days before the rash appears, "Koplik's spots" are to be seen on the inner surface of the cheeks. The spots are a bluish white colour about the size of the head of a pin, and appear like fine specks of lime upon the reddened mucous membrane. If these spots are found on examination of the mouth, especially during an epidemic of measles the patient should immediately be isolated.

When a child shows the symptoms stated above, and especially when cases of measles exist in the district, every precaution should be taken by the parents to prevent any spread of the disease to others. If a child is at school with such symptoms, it should be sent home at once. All visiting should be prohibited. Call the family physician to make certain the child is not suffering from a communicable disease.

When the disease develops, it requires careful nursing and the child should be put to bed at once and remain there until the fever is gone.

After a case of measles has been treated, the bedding, towels, handkerchiefs, etc., used by the patient should be boiled; woodwork of rooms washed with hot water and soap, and then thoroughly aired.

REGULATIONS

The public health regulations require that a case of measles be isolated for ten days after the appearance of the rash and until all discharges from the nose, ears and throat have disappeared and until the cough has ceased.

Contacts, who are immune by a previous attack, may be released after a disinfecting bath and change to uninfected clothing.

Contacts, not immune, may be allowed to engage in their usual occupations for a period of seven days after the first exposure to their infection, following which a period of eight days' isolation must be maintained.

Whenever a case of measles exists in any house or household any member of which attends school, the householder shall, within twelve hours after the time such disease is known to exist, notify the head teacher of such school or schools, and also the medical Health Officer, of the existence of the disease.

No child or person residing upon the premises where measles exists, or who had resided upon such premises within a week prior to the discovery of the disease, shall be permitted to attend school without a certificate from the Medical Health Officer, attending physician or Minister of Public Health, authorizing him or her to do so.

The Public Health Act and regulations made thereunder place a responsibility upon the parent or householder to report within twelve hours, to the Medical Health Officer, or Secretary of the Municipality, any case or suspected case of communicable disease which exists in his or her household. By so doing you can assist in preventing a spread of this disease.

Have the eyesight and hearing tested and the chest examined after an attack of measles.

Remember that early isolation may prevent an epidemic.

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